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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Sixty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1683rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 21 July 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CHANET

later: Ms. MEDINA QUIROGA
(Vice-Chairperson)

later: Ms. CHANET
(Chairperson)

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GE.98-16992 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 40 OF THE COVENANT (agenda item 4) (continued)

Second periodic report of Algeria (CCPR/C/101/Add.1; CCPR/C/83/Q/ALG/1/Rev.1) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the Algerian delegation took places at the Committee table.

2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to comment on the answers given by the delegation of Algeria to the questions asked.

3. Mr. KRETZMER, having thanked the delegation for its replies, said he wished to express his sympathy for the Algerian people and to emphasize that the terror reigning in Algeria could not be condoned, and merited universal condemnation.

4. From the replies given, he understood that judicial investigations were held in order to identify the persons responsible for massacres, and that the only other inquiry was an internal army investigation. There had been serious allegations of collusion between the terrorists and certain members of the armed forces, as a result of which the military had not done as much as it should to stop the massacres and protect the population. He was confident that the Government was in no way party to such collusion but, assuming for the sake of argument that collusion had occurred, he wondered how an internal army investigation would reveal it. He would appreciate more details on the way the inquiry had been carried out.

5. He had not received an adequate reply to his question on torture. The Committee found it difficult, in the light of the evidence before it, to accept the delegation's denial that torture existed in Algeria. He had not asked how individual complaints of torture were dealt with, but rather what kind of monitoring system the authorities had in place to ensure that interrogations were conducted in a way that did not contravene either the law or the provisions of the Covenant.

6. A report by Algeria's own National Human Rights Observatory (ONDH) had stated that there had been cases of incommunicado detention, and that certain detention centres were not subject to the law. The delegation had stated in its reply that incommunicado detention was illegal: the problem was not so much, however, whether a law existed as whether there were persons in Algeria who were acting outside the law, and there was strong evidence that such was the case.

7. Ms. MEDINA QUIROGA said that the delegation had not replied to her question on the special courts, apart from stating that such courts no longer existed. The Committee was not investigating the current situation only, it was also interested in the situation that had existed over a period of years the more so since it was possible that death sentences handed down by the special courts might not have been in accordance with due process. No reply had been given either to her question on the human rights implications of

Decree No 92-03. She had also asked how many complaints of disappearances had been made either to the ONDH or to the courts, how many had been investigated, whether anyone had been sentenced, and whether any of the victims had been found.

8. Since the ONDH admission that secret detention centres existed, what action had been taken on the matter? Why had such bodies as Amnesty International and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) not been permitted to visit prisons? Had there been any investigation into the activities of the security forces at the time of the massacres, and particularly into whether they had assisted victims, in view of the evidence that, in one case, calls to the gendarmerie had gone unanswered?

9. Lastly, she would appreciate more information on the very severe press censorship imposed by Act No. 90-07 of 3 April 1990, which made it a crime to publish information that might be prejudicial to national security or insulting to the honour of the nation.

10. LORD COLVILLE said he wished to make it quite clear that he deplored the terrorism in Algeria, admired what was being done to help the victims, and accepted that the population needed to be able to defend itself. He also accepted that any offences committed by members of the legitimate defence groups would be punished. However, there had been a specific case in which such a group had acted out of revenge and had left its own territory to operate elsewhere. That could not have happened if the group had been under a proper command structure and properly trained. In his view, putting weapons in the hands of unsupervised and untrained civilians was a danger to the public and posed a threat to the right to life under article 6 of the Covenant.

11. While he was not attacking the delegation of Algeria, he failed to understand why it was unwilling to reply to questions that were of legitimate concern to the Committee.

12. Ms. EVATT thanked the delegation for the information it had given, but said she was not satisfied with the replies to the questions asked. The Committee's task was not to engage in political debate but to find out what legal and practical measures the Government was taking to deal with the situation.

13. She had still not received a reply to her question as to whether it would be lawful for a woman raped in an act of terrorism to have an abortion, and whether there had been any prosecutions of persons found guilty of rape in such circumstances.

14. Mr. POCAR said that the numerous allegations of enforced disappearances in Algeria raised issues of great importance in relation to various articles of the Covenant and deserved a clear and precise reply. Unfortunately the answers given had been somewhat hasty, and had all been in the context of the report of the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances. Replies to another United Nations body were not necessarily sufficient to

satisfy the Committee, which was concerned specifically with compliance with the provisions of the Covenant. The delegation had a duty to provide answers in accordance with the Committee's procedures.

15. He therefore wished to repeat the question he had asked the previous day, namely, what investigations had been carried out into the disappearances, what had been the result, and what action had been taken in regard to those identified as responsible.

16. Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) said it was not his delegation's intention to conceal the facts or to try to avoid giving explanations. Nevertheless, many of the questions asked related to mere allegations, which had not been proved. If the Committee knew of actual cases in which torture had occurred, it should provide the delegation with the facts, so that an official investigation could be made. He pointed out that, in November 1996, his Government had submitted a report to the Committee against Torture giving a full account of the situation in Algeria in that regard. It was willing to make available to the Human Rights Committee copies of the correspondence exchanged in all reported cases of disappearances, documentation that was essential to a proper understanding of the position.

17. The reports of non-governmental (NGOs) such as Amnesty International were often quoted, but the assertions made in them had not been tested under any recognized procedure and remained nothing more than allegations. When accusations were made against a sovereign State, the principle of presumption of innocence should be respected, and amateurism avoided. He had been greatly shocked by the Committee's use of the phrase "State terrorism".

18. Although certain past practices had perhaps been questionable, the necessary changes had been introduced and progress made. Irrespective of the number of times capital punishment had been used in the past, what was important was that, five years previously, Algeria had decided to abolish it. A human rights monitoring system did in fact exist: control was exercised not only by Parliament, but also by the ONDH.

19. ICRC relations with Algeria were entirely normal. In October 1998 it would be sending a mission to the country which would engage in prison visits.

20. Mr. HELLAB (Algeria), in reply to the question on what kind of investigations had been carried out into the massacres, said that in addition to the judicial investigation there had been independent inquiries. More than 360 journalists from all over the world had been allowed free access to the sites, and there had also been inquiries by the ONDH and by parliamentarians of both Government and opposition parties. On the question of the failure of the gendarmerie to respond to a telephone call, he said that the line in question had been cut before the call was made.

21. There had perhaps been some misunderstanding with regard to the legitimate defence groups, or community guards. They received six months' training, and never acted independently but always under the control of police officers. Once the immediate threat to their community had passed, they would be disbanded, and the task of defence would be left to the police.

22. Mrs. ZERROUKI (Algeria), responding to the question concerning the special courts, said that they had been set up in 1992 to deal with terrorist offences, and had existed until 1995. Because of the dangers to which juries in such cases were exposed, the courts were composed only of magistrates, whose identity was kept secret for their own protection.

23. The right to defence counsel had been guaranteed in proceedings before the special courts as had the principles of non-retroactivity of the law and the presumption of innocence. In the operation of the special courts, there had been a distinction made between procedural rules, which had been applied retroactively, and substantive rules, which had not. Concerning the suspension of lawyers by the special courts, she said the regulation in question, which had been adopted in response to the numerous problems faced in 1992, had never been applied because the members of the bar had hotly opposed it.

24. Mr. HAMED ABDELWAHAB (Algeria), responding to the comments and questions about the number of times the death penalty had been pronounced by the special courts, said the first such decisions dated back to 1991. The death penalty was applied by judges on the basis of the gravity of the offence. Bombings and collective massacres that had left great numbers of victims, murders followed by rape and mutilation that represented the height of barbarism were all infractions that were subject to the death penalty under criminal law. In many cases, the accused were members of armed groups who were still at large and had been the subject of contumacious judgements, where the law provided that the maximum penalty should be imposed.

25. The figure of 1,991 death sentences had been greatly played up by the media and the NGOs. Only 287 had been adversary judgements and thus subject to execution, while the remainder, being contumacious judgements, became null and void upon the appearance before the court or the apprehension of the convicted person. About half of the 287 adversary judgements had been the subject of applications for judicial review and were currently before the Supreme Court. None of the remaining judgements had been carried out. The guilty parties had thus not been punished, and the sufferings of the victims of atrocities and their families could be imagined.

26. Clemency was a common approach in Algerian society and the death penalty had rarely been imposed before 1991. Since 1962, for example, not a single woman had been executed. Since 1990, only 22 death penalties had been carried out - the death toll of terrorism was far higher.

27. Mrs. KARADJA (Algeria), replying to a question regarding the ONDH, said it was responsible for monitoring respect for human rights by governmental institutions. It received complaints from citizens and, in investigating such complaints, could request information from the relevant authorities and could even bring issues to the attention of the President of the Republic. It was not, however, in a position to determine whether or not secret detention centres existed: it could only report and investigate complaints on the subject.

28. Acts of rape were committed on a massive basis by the terrorists. They were subject to prosecution under the law and therapeutic abortion was

available, information on that subject being disseminated by an interministerial committee. Abortion was often practised by the rapists themselves in the sense that once a woman or girl was found to be pregnant, she was killed.

29. Mr. BUERGENTHAL said that, while he agreed with Mr. Dembri that there was a problem of methodology in the Committee's discussion of Algeria's report, he did not agree with the diagnosis of the nature of the problem. The Committee's task was to use the reports provided by Member States to determine how they were discharging their responsibilities under the Covenant. The Committee had both the right and the duty to challenge the information contained in the reports and, to that end, it made use of information from outside sources and supplied delegations with lists of questions. It was neither a court seeking to establish guilt nor a propaganda organ looking for material. Its purpose was to elucidate the facts in the interests of constructive dialogue with the Member States and, to do so, it needed full, factual responses to its questions.

30. It was always a matter of concern to the Committee, therefore, when answers to its questions were not forthcoming, and that was currently the case with Algeria. On three issues - the access of the ICRC to prisons, the presence of foreign observers at trials and the failure of police forces to respond to a telephoned alert about a massacre - the response of the Algerian delegation had been disappointing.

31. Ms. MEDINA QUIROGA said she endorsed the previous speaker's remarks and would like to receive a copy of the latest ONDH report.

32. Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) said that the dialogue would have been more productive had his delegation been aware from the start that lively debate and the challenging of documentary sources were both allowed and encouraged. Documents - whether from within the United Nations system or outside it - often had to be read with a critical eye. He would see to it that the Committee received a copy of the 1996 report of the ONDH and also of the March 1998 report of the Ombudsman.

33. It was surprising, however, that the Centre for Human Rights did not provide the documentation needed by the Committee for its work. The texts requested by the Committee during the previous day's discussion could have easily been procured by the Centre, but his delegation had done that work itself and had supplied them to the Committee.

34. The CHAIRPERSON said she would transmit the documents in question to all the members of the Committee who desired copies. She invited the Algerian delegation to reply to the questions contained in the final list of issues (CCPR/C/63/Q/ALG/1/Rev.1), starting with paragraph 11.

35. Mrs. KARADJA (Algeria) said that acts of rape were mainly attributable to armed groups. According to a so-called religious decree issued by fundamentalist groups in 1994, the wives of enemies were to be regarded as the spoils of war. Since then the incidence of kidnapping of women followed by rape had increased.

36. A question had been asked about nikah al-mut'ah (temporary marriage for sexual pleasure), but that was not part of the Islamic religious culture of northern Africa. It was a practice used in Afghanistan, where the armed groups had trained, but their actions in Algeria had nothing to do with any religious rite. Rape and sexual violence, the enslavement of women, collective rape and the commission of unnatural acts were what was involved. Another form of violence against women was mutilation, particularly of the genital organs and abdomen, while women were murdered in the most horrifying ways. Those sadistic refinements corresponded to the ideological notion widespread among the armed groups that the more pain one inflicted, the closer one drew to Paradise.

37. As to the investigation of cases, it was a rare occurrence because women were usually killed after having been subjected to violence by the armed groups. The measures taken to deal with such violence included the training of 800 women who were being assigned to urban police stations to receive complaints from women and young girls concerning rape and sexual violence. The purpose was to help women overcome their fears and shame in such situations. Other steps included efforts to provide support and solidarity through social workers and members of NGOs and to disseminate religious and cultural messages so as to overcome the stigma accompanying the suffering of such women. Finally, the Ministry of the Interior had adopted a regulation declaring raped women to be victims.

38. Ms. Medina Quiroga, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

39. Miss CHAIEB (Algeria) said that abortion was provided by the State free of charge to rape victims in both public and private hospitals. It was one means of restoring the person concerned to mental health. The measure had been instituted in response to requests from families, and more and more women were taking advantage of it. Women were not obliged to have abortions, however: some gave birth and then abandoned the child to State institutions or gave it up for adoption.

40. Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) added that therapeutic abortion was provided for in the Code of Public Health. As for nikah al-mut'ah, it was a practice that was contrary to the Islamic religious rites of northern Africa and was attributable to the training of the armed groups in Afghanistan.

41. Mrs. BOUABDELLAH (Algeria) said that the National Committee for the Preservation and Promotion of Women had been established for the purpose of concretizing the Government's policy in the field of promotion of women's rights following Algeria's ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It was presided over by a woman and its membership included, in addition to representatives of ministries and other State institutions, several representatives of trade unions, employers' associations, women's associations and a number of well-known public personalities. The National Committee had been preceded in 1996 by the National Committee for the Preservation and Promotion of the Family, a permanent body attached to the Ministry of National Solidarity and the Family whose principal function was to assist needy families.

42. There were no practical restrictions on women's participation in public life. The proportion of women magistrates (677 out of a total of 2,506) was higher than in most countries. There were nine women members of the National Council and seven of the Council of State; 322 women had stood for office in the recent parliamentary elections, and 75 of them had been elected; and there had been a woman candidate for the office of President of the Republic.

43. With regard to the question in paragraph 12, subparagraph (c), she said that the equality of citizens before the law was proclaimed in the Constitution. Neither the Civil Code nor the Criminal Code contained any provisions that discriminated against women in any way. For example, the law governing adultery did not provide for heavier penalties for adulterous women than for men. So far as inheritance was concerned, the Family Code was largely based on the principles of Sharia law. Lastly, as regards the passing on of nationality to children and citizenship, she said that a child of an Algerian mother and an unknown father was automatically an Algerian citizen.

44. Ms. Chanet resumed the Chair.

45. Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) said that the Algerian Nationality Code was based on a combination of jus sanguinis and jus soli.

46. Mrs. ZERROUKI (Algeria), replying to question 13, said that freedom of thought, conscience and religion was guaranteed by article 36 of the Constitution. There was nothing in the Algerian legal system that obliged anyone to belong to a religious group or to a recognized church. The office of President of the Republic was the only one for which profession of the Muslim religion was a requirement. Some other posts were reserved to Algerian nationals, but religion was never a criterion. It was true, however, that people who might previously have openly proclaimed their atheism were perhaps afraid to do so in the current crisis.

47. Mrs. ZERROUKI (Algeria), replying to the questions in paragraph 14, said that the right to establish political parties had been provided in the old Constitution subject to certain conditions which had proved in practice to be insufficiently precise to guarantee the exercise of political rights on a sound democratic basis. The new Constitution laid down a general regulatory framework for the activities of political parties, and the purpose of the Act referred to in the first question was to implement those provisions.

48. The principles and aims of article 3 of the Act were not exclusively religious but extended to the whole of Algeria's common heritage. The conditions for establishing a political party were set out in paragraph 114 of the report (CCPR/C/101/Add.1), and other relevant rules and conditions were to be found in paragraphs 115 to 118. So far, 23 political parties, including the most representative ones, had completed the transitional period and conformed to the provisions of the revised Constitution.

49. Miss AKEB (Algeria), replying to the question in paragraph 15 and to a supplementary question asked by a member of the Committee in connection with Act No. 90-07 of 3 April 1990, said that reporting of information considered to be potentially threatening to national unity did not lead to suspension of publication. Several cases of suspension of newspapers had occurred in 1992

and 1993, when it had been felt that information published could be construed as propaganda in favour of terrorist groups. The journalists concerned had protested, stating that it was their duty to inform the public and an extensive debate had taken place. As a result, there had been no further suspensions of publication for any reason, including security considerations, since 1993.

50. The state of emergency had had no consequences for the press; all the major newspapers had continued to be published throughout the period, the national union of journalists had remained active and so forth. The "comités de lecture" referred to by a Committee member in a supplementary question were no longer in existence. While it was true that the existing Information Code provided for penalties of imprisonment for defamation (para. 166 of the report), a new law that was currently being drafted in consultation with journalists and other members of civil society replaced those penalties by simple fines. Finally, in reply to a further question, she said that the last killing of a journalist had occurred on 11 August 1996.

51. Mrs. ZERROUKI (Algeria), replying to the questions in paragraph 16, said that Algerian law distinguished between public meetings and public demonstrations, the latter being held out of doors and potentially involving crowd movements. The only restriction placed by the Constitution on the freedom of assembly was the preservation of public order and security. The arrangements for obtaining authorization to hold a public meeting were very flexible; a declaration stating the object, place, time, duration, etc., of the proposed meeting and bearing the signatures of at least three persons, had to be submitted to the Prefect of Police three days in advance, and authorization was withheld only in rare cases where a disturbance of public order was considered likely.

52. In the case of public demonstrations, the application had to be submitted eight days in advance and had to contain a detailed indication of the route, the anticipated number of participants, and the financing arrangements. The Prefect was required to reach a decision within five days and, if authorization was withheld, had to give his reasons to the Ministry of the Interior. Again, only demonstrations where an infringement of public order was anticipated were banned. As previously mentioned, more than 15,000 political meetings had been held in Algeria since the beginning of the state of emergency.

53. With regard to associations, the principle of the participation of civil society in the running of public affairs was proclaimed in four articles of the Constitution. The number of associations of various kinds - cooperative, scientific, cultural, charitable, etc. - had risen from only 17 in 1962 to several thousands in 1998. The registration procedure included the signing of an application by at least 15 founding members, who had to be of Algerian nationality, the adoption of statutes by a general assembly of members, and various other formalities. Government subsidies to the associations ran into tens of millions of dollars, and associations were represented on the National Council for Youth, the Economic and Social Council, the Education Council, the Consumers' Protection Council, the National Council for the Environment, and so forth.

54. Mrs. ZERROUKI (Algeria) said that freedom of assembly was guaranteed by the Constitution even under the state of emergency. No authorization was required for a public meeting and the authorities could not prohibit a meeting without referring the case to a magistrate. Demonstrations, on the other hand, were subject to authorization.

55. The authorities could neither dissolve an association nor prohibit its establishment. If they considered that an association had failed to comply with the legal requirements governing associations, they were obliged to refer the matter to an administrative court. Administrative judges in Algeria formed part of the judiciary and were irremovable.

56. Many demonstrations had been prohibited under the state of emergency because of the threat of terrorist acts but such prohibitions could be challenged in the courts. In a case brought by the Socialist Forces Front, for example, the Administrative Division of the Court of Algiers had ruled against a demonstration ban by the authorities on the grounds that the constitutional freedom in question could be restricted only where there was a serious risk of a breach of the peace. The victims of the seizure of newspapers by the authorities (a type of incident that belonged to the past) could also have challenged that action in the courts but had failed to do so.

57. The law entitled a third party to request the suspension or dissolution of an association. Another association, for example, could complain that its acronym had been appropriated without its authority. The courts would then apply the rules of ordinary law. To date, however, no such case had occurred.

58. Mr. HAMED ABDELWAHAB (Algeria), responding to paragraph 17, said that, under the Government's policy of bringing the administration of justice closer to the people, courts had been established even in extremely remote parts of the country, such as on the frontiers of Niger and Mali, an area 2,500 kilometres to the south of Algiers. Unconditional irremovability of judges would discriminate in practice against those in the south of the country, because their colleagues in the north would systematically refuse to be transferred to the harsh climatic conditions of the south. For that reason, the term of irremovability had been reduced to seven years in the Status of the Judiciary Bill currently before the National Assembly. The previous legislation had been amended, in response to a request by the Judges' Association, by a commission composed entirely of judges under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice.

59. The future Higher Council of Justice would have 31 members. Twenty judges would be elected by their peers at the various levels of the system. There would be six ex officio members: the President and Procurator-General of the Supreme Court, the President and Commissioner-General of the Council of State, the Minister of Justice and the Director of Personnel at the Ministry of Justice. Four members would be appointed by the President of the Republic.

60. The Higher Council of Justice would bear sole and sovereign responsibility for the administration of the careers of members of the judiciary. It would also operate as a disciplinary body and would be financially autonomous. Judges would in future be entitled to refuse offers of promotion, so that such offers could no longer be used as a means of

sidestepping the principle of irremovability. The Status of the Judiciary Bill was currently before the National Assembly and would be adopted at the next parliamentary session.

61. Mrs. ZERROUKI (Algeria), responding to paragraph 18, said that the special courts had been abolished in February 1995.

62. Where a person had been tried in absentia, the sentence could not be implemented under any circumstances. As soon as the individual concerned was taken into custody, the previous proceedings were declared null and void and a retrial was ordered, with the usual investigation by an examining magistrate.

63. All the provisions of article 14 of the Covenant were guaranteed under Algerian law, including the right to prepare a defence and to communicate with counsel, the presumption of innocence, the non-retroactivity of criminal law, and the principle of equality. Where a court failed to provide the requisite guarantees, defence counsel could bring an action for annulment. Following the abolition of the special criminal courts, for example, many of their decisions had been quashed by the Supreme Court. In the case of proceedings in absentia or trials for misdemeanours or non-criminal offences, appeals lay to the Court of Cassation.

64. Mrs. BOUABDELLAH (Algeria), replying to the questions in paragraph 19, said that the provisions of the Covenant had not yet been invoked before the courts in Algeria, possibly because no domestic law had been considered incompatible with its provisions. She confirmed, however, that duly ratified treaties took precedence over domestic legislation.

65. Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria), responding to paragraph 20, said that Arabic had been recognized as the national and official language in all the constitutions since Algerian independence in 1962. The Ordinance of 21 December 1996 concerning the promotion of the Arabic language had amended previous legislation dating from 1968 and 1991.

66. None of those instruments had been directed against any other language. Berber languages were spoken in many parts of Algeria and the Amazigh language was recognized in the Preamble to the Constitution as a basic constituent of the Algerian personality.

67. During the colonial period, however, the use of Arabic as an educational medium had been prohibited and its use in society discouraged. It was only natural, therefore, that independence had led to the restoration and promotion of the Arabic language in the educational system and in administration. However, foreign languages were by no means neglected. Whereas 95 per cent of the Algerian population had been illiterate in 1962, three quarters were bilingual in 1998.

68. The 1991 Ordinance concerning the promotion of Arabic had established a 1996 deadline for achievement of its aims and the 1996 Ordinance had extended those deadlines and established a Higher Council of the Arabic Language to advise the President on ways of promoting Arabic and on possible derogations from the provisions of the Ordinance. The French language could, however, continue to be used in both public and private life.

69. With regard to the Amazigh language, the Berber people actually spoke five different dialects. In 1994, the President had established a High Commissioner's Office for the Amazigh language to carry out research into the common core of the dialects and to decide upon a method of transcription. The Amazigh language was already being taught in schools in 16 departments of the country. Public services were accessible to people speaking local dialects and a national radio station had been broadcasting in Berber dialects since 1962. Algeria certainly had no desire to erase any component of its historical or cultural heritage and the term "Arabization" was, perhaps, misleading and should be replaced by "promotion of the Arabic language".

70. Mrs. KARADJA (Algeria), replying to the questions in paragraph 21, said that the National Human Rights Observatory (ONDH) was a joint body composed of appointed representatives of governmental organizations and representatives of NGOs and civil society who were elected by their peers. The ONDH received complaints from citizens concerning violations of human rights. Established in 1992, it was an advisory body reporting directly to the President. It had 26 members and 15 regional representatives. Steps were currently being taken to increase the number of regional representatives.

71. The Ombudsman of the Republic was responsible for investigating any malfunctioning of the country's public services. He served as a mediator between individual citizens and the public authorities and referred cases to the President of the Republic when the authorities concerned failed to act on a complaint. The Ombudsman was appointed by the President.

72. Mr. SOUALEM (Algeria), responding to paragraph 22, listed a number of events that had been held in Algeria in 1997: in February 1997, an international meeting on trade union freedoms; in November 1997, an international seminar on human rights organized by the Arab Institute of Human Rights; in December 1997, a conference on the right to information (the press and the audio-visual media); in September 1997, an international symposium on contemporary forms of violence; and in April 1997, a forum on human rights at the Châteauneuf Higher Police Academy. All the events he had mentioned had received government support.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.